

21 January 1963

**MEMORANDUM**

**SUBJECT: Political Murders in Cuba--Batista Era  
Compared with Castro Regime**

1. It is estimated that roughly 20,000 politically-inspired murders and deaths during revolutionary action occurred during Batista's last term in office--10 March 1952 to 31 December 1958. However, no accurate estimate is possible. Most of these deaths took place during 1957 and 1958 as Castro's revolutionary threat became progressively more potent and as the Batista regime sought to counter it with a campaign of terror. As regime-inspired terrorism mounted, anti-Batista groups engaged in counter terrorism against regime supporters and by mid-1958 killings had become widespread and general throughout the country. The regime's campaign of terror got out of control and the government in Havana probably had no clear idea of how many killings the police and army forces were committing. Similarly, the anti-Batista forces--which by mid-1958 had the support of 80 to 90 percent of the population--had little control over the acts of counterterrorism being committed against pro-Batista elements throughout the country.

2. The estimate of 20,000 deaths for political reasons during the Batista era includes only a relatively small number killed in actual military encounters between the Batista-Castro forces.

3. Anti-Castro exile groups estimate that since Castro's coming to power in January 1959, there have been nearly 2,500 executions. Some 800 executions have been publicly announced by the regime. There is no information to permit an accurate estimate of the numbers of executions, but it is known that there have been many more than those publicly announced. In addition, there have been many, perhaps several hundred, anti-Castro resistance fighters killed by the militia and police

in numerous scattered encounters, especially in the mountains of Las Villas province. In addition, there have been sporadic killings by anti-Castro forces of Castro's militiamen and other officials. However, the large-scale campaigns of murders and terrorism characteristic of the last years of the Batista regime have not occurred during the Castro regime.